

# How Community Liaison Officers Support Resilience

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**Note:** The text below was posted on the *Fostering Resilience* blog on May 8th 2017. The blog is located on the Department of State's OpenNet (intranet) site.

It is spring in Washington DC, which means that the summer transfer season is just around the corner. As I think about this summer's transition, I'm reminded how invaluable Community Liaison Office (CLO) Coordinators are to fostering resilience at overseas posts. Here are just a few ways CLOs contribute to resilience and therefore help us achieve U.S. foreign policy goals:

- **Social Sponsors:** Social connections are very important for one's personal resilience and CLOs ensure that new Foreign Service personnel and their families have social sponsors who provide support at a time when we are most vulnerable – just after a move to a new city, new job, new school, new home, and new boss.
- **Community Connections:** CLOs often organize community-wide events that build the connections between people, strengthening the overall resilience of the mission. When people get to know each other beyond the work environment, they resolve misunderstandings more quickly and collaborate more effectively when under stress or in a crisis.
- **Familial Resilience:** As advocates for employees and family members, CLOs advise post management on quality of life issues, and recommend solutions and family-friendly post policies. This helps ensure that Foreign Service families thrive despite the hardships associated with a mobile lifestyle.
- **Sounding Board:** While many members of the foreign affairs community are reluctant to ask for help, most see the CLO as a safe person to talk with. The CLO often provides advice and mentorship, helping community members work through challenges and adapt to new environments. The CLO can also be important support for people who need to seek care from a mental health professional but are reluctant to take the first step.
- **Feedback for Senior Leadership:** CLOs are often the best gauge of community morale and provide leadership with a reality check on how the community is really doing. CLOs can help leadership understand the level of community resilience and identify areas that need to be strengthened.
- **Crisis Resilience:** In a crisis, the CLO ensures that all community members receive critical information and are being taken care of. CLOs often remind leadership that people need to take care of themselves during a crisis, ensuring that people don't burn out and are better able to perform under stress.